

LORENA
CHICAGO STATE
UNIVERSITY



 **CHICAGO, IL**
Partnerships to STEP-UP in
Health Careers

Every little step makes a big difference along the way.

As a child growing up in Chicago's South Side, Lorena wanted to be a doctor because she enjoyed helping others. She experienced many challenges and setbacks that delayed her education goals. It seemed that for every step she took forward, Lorena was knocked back two. However, regardless of what she endured, Lorena did not give up on her dreams.

HPOG funds a program called **Partnership to STEP UP in Health Careers (STEP UP)** at Chicago State University. In the spring of 2017, Lorena's best friend, who was in STEP UP, introduced Lorena to the program. Lorena decided to learn more about STEP UP and attended orientation. After applying, Lorena was selected and started the certified nursing assistant (CNA) program.

Although it was tough for Lorena, she learned to balance family life and school. Her motivation was knowing that she would be in a better position to help herself. Lorena said, "In past years I have worked several jobs in different fields, and it was not fulfilling or leading to anything. The CNA program was exciting and not boring. I also knew that completing the program would change my life!"

During the program, Lorena experienced health and housing issues. She reached out to STEP UP for support services, and staff provided referrals for assistance. Lorena remembers, "It was challenging for me to keep going and I thought about

stopping, but I wanted more. I wanted to succeed! I never lost faith in me!" Her belief in God and herself kept her going forward. Lorena's best friend and children helped her with household chores and cooking so she could study and complete her schoolwork.

With the help of STEP UP, Lorena completed the program and is currently working as a CNA. She also decided to further her career opportunities by enrolling in the Medical Assistant (MA) program and expects to complete her MA studies in 2020. Lorena feels good about her future and her ultimate goal is to become a nurse.

Lorena is grateful for her case managers and academic advisors. She credits them with making it possible for her to get the necessary education and training to work in the healthcare field.

She hopes the future will bring her stability and professional growth. Lorena believes her future is unlimited and full of opportunities.

This success story was self-identified by the grantee and information contained in this document was provided by the grantee.